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SERM.

THREE SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S,
MARITZBURG,

BY

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

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[No. 5.—Third Series.]

A SERMON

PREFACED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Morning, June 17, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

ST. LUKE I.76-79.—*And thou, child ! shalt be called the prophet of the Highest ; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

DEAN ALFORD makes the following remarks upon the first four verses of this chapter, which you have heard read as the first Lesson of this Morning's Service :—

The peculiar style of this preface,—which is purer Greek than the contents of the Gospel, and also more laboured and formal,—may be accounted for,—partly, because *it is the composition of the Evangelist himself, and not translated from Hebrew sources like the rest*,—and partly, because prefaces, especially when also dedicatory, are usually in a rounded and artificial style. *Gr. Test.* I. p. 303.

According to the view, then, of this commentator, we have in this short preface the expression of the writer's own mind in his own language: whereas in the rest of the Gospel we have mere translations from Hebrew sources,—repetitions in the Greek tongue, doubtless with more or less of modification, of traditionary narratives in the Hebrew or rather Syriac tongue, which he had gathered from all quarters. For the words of this preface are very instructive, and throw considerable light upon the manner in which the “Lives of Jesus” were written in those days.

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,—[or, perhaps, which

have been fulfilled—brought to pass—among us,]—even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things—[or, rather, having traced down all things carefully]—from the beginning,—to write unto thee in order—[in an orderly manner,]—most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things about which thou hast been instructed.”

From these words we learn the following facts.

(i) At the time when this Gospel was written, “*many*” Gospels, or accounts of the Life of Jesus, had been already composed.

(ii) The writers of those Gospels, as well as the writer of *this*, which we call St. Luke’s, had not been themselves “eyewitnesses” of what they related,—were not themselves numbered among the immediate disciples of Christ. Nor does it even appear, as many assume, that they had received themselves from the lips or from the writings of the apostles and first disciples the narratives which they recorded. The text says only that they took in hand to describe those events, as the “eyewitnesses and ministers of the word” had generally reported to them,—to give what they believed to be a true account of the apostles’ teaching, a faithful record of those reports, from whomsoever they had received them. It is obvious that such expressions might well be applied to an earnest and devout attempt to gather up into an orderly history such traditions as were then current among Christians, and supposed to rest upon sufficient authority.

(iii) We learn, lastly, that the writer of this Gospel, whoever he may have been, made diligent enquiry on all points, tracing down, as well as he could, the accounts of the Life of Jesus from the time of his infancy, and recording them for the instruction of some one named Theophilus,—either a friend of his own, or, as many think, a person introduced under a feigned name, meaning “lover of God,” to represent any devout Christian, who might desire to be more fully informed upon these matters.

The tradition of the Church ascribes the composition of this Gospel to Luke, St. Paul’s companion in travel; and there are some who have gone so far as to say that it was written under the direction and superintendence of St. Paul himself, and contains the substance of his teaching, if it is not indeed the very document to which he himself refers by using in three places, Rom.ii.26,xvi.25, 2 Tim.ii.8, the ex-

pression “according to my Gospel.” This last idea, which has the authority of three, at least, of the most famous ancient Fathers of the Church,—Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome,—is now justly rejected,—for instance, by Dean Alford,—as altogether without foundation, the word “Gospel” being never used in the N.T. in this sense, *viz.*, to denote an historical narrative of the life and doings of Jesus, but always to express the message of life from the Blessed God, ministered to men by Christ or his apostles. Nor is it at all certain that the more general tradition, which assigns to St. Luke the compilation of this Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles, is more to be relied on.

But, whoever this writer was, one thing is very noticeable in his narrative, namely, that, though he made such very close and careful enquiries,—though he has traced down, as he says, everything from the first beginning,—yet he has only been able to record for us one single event out of the childhood, and youth, and early manhood, of Christ. About his *infancy*,—about the events connected closely with his birth,—he tells us much, of which we read nothing in any other of the Gospels. He gives an account of the miraculous conception, birth, and circumcision, of John the Baptist,—of the visits of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias and to Mary, and of his conversations with them,—of the prophetical songs or psalms, uttered by Zacharias, Elizabeth, and Mary,—with many other details, which we find in the second chapter, and of which, as I have said, the other Evangelists seem to have known nothing. But all these are closely connected with the story of the birth of Jesus, and it has been said that they were most probably obtained “out of the archives of the Virgin Mary.” So, in fact, Dean Alford seems to hold, who says that we have here—

a documentary record of the events preceding and accompanying the birth of our Lord, derived probably from her, who alone was competent to narrate several particulars contained in it.

But then, surely, these same “archives,” which contained so full an account, not only of the birth of Jesus, but also of that of John, would have afforded also to an earnest enquirer some further information about the childhood and youth of the son of Mary. One incident only of this kind is mentioned, namely, that at twelve years of age he was left behind by his parents in Jerusalem, and was found by them, after a weary search of three days, sitting among the doctors

in one of the temple-chambers, “ both hearing them and asking them questions ”;—

“ and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.”

But this is all ; the rest of his youth and manhood, up to thirty years of age, is summed up in this statement :—

“ Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

The circumstance, that this one instance *is* mentioned of our Lord’s boyhood, besides those out of his infancy, is sufficient to show that the writer did not intend to confine his narrative only to the single year of ministerial activity. While the fact, that “ the parents of Jesus sought him sorrowing ” on that occasion at Jerusalem, shows also that his mother Mary was then alive, as indeed she was many years afterwards, at the time of the crucifixion and after it, Acts ii.14 ; so that her “ archives,” if they really existed, must surely have contained something more than the mere account of his birth.

The real truth, no doubt, is this, that the writer could find no other traditions, which he deemed worthy of inserting in his narrative, respecting the early part of the life of Jesus. Such traditions indeed there were in the Ancient Church, or rather such legends, invented freely by ingenious, and apparently pious, persons, to fill up in some measure the blank. There was the “ Gospel of the Birth of Mary ” ; there was the “ Protevangelion,” ascribed to James the Less, one of the Apostles, and first Bishop of the Church in Jerusalem, which recounts additional marvels in the early life both of Mary and Jesus ; there was the “ Gospel of Thomas,” containing the History of the Childhood of Jesus,—all which have come down to us,—besides a multitude of other apocryphal books, which are mentioned by different ancient writers, but are now lost. In the last of these, the “ Gospel of Thomas,” is related the visit made by Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem, when they left the child Jesus behind in the Temple, almost exactly as we find it in St. Luke, but with this addition :—

“ The Scribes and Pharisees answered and said to Mary, “ Art thou the mother of this boy ? The Lord hath blessed thee : for the like of this glory and wisdom in children we have neither seen, nor heard that any one has mentioned.”

This is preceded by the account of the following miracle, wrought by Jesus when a mere boy :—

And again Joseph had sent his son James to gather sticks, and Jesus was going with him. And, whilst they were gathering sticks, a viper bit James in

his hand. And when Jesus came near him, he did to him nothing more, but stretched out his hand to him, and blew upon the bite, and it was healed.

Generally speaking, however, these apocryphal books are full of strange accounts of extravagant miracles, wrought by the kiss of Jesus, by the touch of his swaddling-clothes or of the water in which he was washed, or by the smell of his garments, as in the following narrative from the "Gospel of the Infaney":—

Another woman in that city had likewise two sons sick. And, when one was dead, the other, who lay at the point of death, she took in her arms to the Lady St. Mary, and in a flood of tears addressed herself to her, saying, "O my Lady! help and relieve me; for I had two sons; the one I have just now buried; the other I see is just at the point of death: behold, how I earnestly seek favour from God and pray to Him." Then she said, "O Lord! Thou art gracious and merciful and kind; Thou hast given me two sons; one of them Thou hast taken to Thyself; O spare me this other." The Virgin Mary, then, perceiving the greatness of her sorrow, pitied her and said, "Do thou place thy son in my son's bed, and cover him with his clothes." And, when she had placed him in the bed wherein Christ lay, at the moment when his eyes were just closed by death, as soon as ever the smell of the garments of the Lord Jesus Christ reached the boy, his eyes were opened; and, calling with a loud voice to his mother, he asked for bread, and, when he had received it, he sucked it. Then his mother said, "O Lady Mary! now I am assured that the powers of God do dwell in you; so that thy son can cure children who are of the same sort as himself, as soon as they touch his garments." This boy, who was thus cured, is the same who in the Gospel is called Bartholomew.

I have read to you this passage in order that you may feel how different is the tone of these miraculous narratives from that which marks generally the miracles recorded in the canonical Scriptures. Some, indeed, of these latter resemble more in character the best of the apocryphal stories,—as where we read of Peter, at Christ's command, catching a fish, and finding in the mouth of it a coin, with which to pay the Temple tribute-money, or where we are told that—

"They brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least *the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them*,"—

or where it is stated that "from the body of Paul"—

"they brought unto the sick *handkerchiefs and aprons*, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

But, generally speaking, there is a solemnity and gravity in the Scripture accounts,—an instructive meaning in the miracles wrought,—an edifying force in the language in which they are described,—which we miss almost entirely in these later traditions, or rather, legendary inventions, some of which, however, as those of the "Gospel of Thomas," were in existence so early as the Second Century. If the

author of St. Luke's Gospel knew any of these as already existing, he must have rejected them as in his view incredible or untrustworthy. Yet plainly the first two chapters of the Gospel, after the four introductory verses, betray the traditional source from which they are derived. As Dean Alford says—

The style now totally alters, and becomes Hebraistic, signifying that the following is translated or compiled from an Aramaic oral narration, or perhaps (from the very distinct character of these first two chapters) [from an Aramaic] document.

No doubt, this judgment is correct. The writer has here translated from a Syriac document, which had come into his hands,—not composed, we may be sure, by the Virgin Mary, nor drawn out of her “archives,” but written by some pious hand in that early age, when, as a thousand instances show, it was thought no crime to add legend upon legend to the true history of our Saviour's life, and to ascribe the books containing them to the very apostles themselves. That here, too, we have legendary matter is sufficiently plain. A clear proof of this lies in the simple record of these angelic appearances to Zacharias and Mary,—of the angel's conversing with them, we must suppose, in the vernacular Syriac, and proclaiming himself to the former by name, as “Gabriel,”—as if in heaven the angels were really called by such Hebrew names as *Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Phanuel, &c.*, as we find them called in the book of Tobit or in that of Enoch! In fact, it is well-known, that this angelic lore is only a later development of the Jewish Religion after the return from Babylon, and that none of these names appear in the older Scriptures. It is not, therefore, necessary to believe that the dumb Zacharias wrote down at once a full account of what Gabriel had said to him in the temple, and of his own reply,—or that Mary, in like manner, was careful to record the words which the angel addressed to her, and her own conversation with him,—that some one again set down the words of Elizabeth when she greeted Mary, or the strains of poetry in which Mary responded, or the song with which Zachariah's mouth was opened, when “his tongue was loosed, and he spake, and praised God.” Happy is it for us that we can read these devout compositions in the light of modern investigations, without being obliged to feel that all our trust in the Living God, all our hope for this life and for eternity, depends on our believing that the angel did actually appear to Zachariah,

"standing on the right side of the altar of incense," and said unto him—

"I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee and to shew thee these glad tidings!"

The words of the text are taken from the song ascribed to Zachariah by the pious writer of this narrative, and express therefore the feelings with which this brother-man, from the emotions of his own heart, conceived Zachariah's heart to be filled, while addressing, on this occasion, his infant child, the future Baptist.

"Thou, child! shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,—to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us."

This was spoken, then, of the *forerunner* only of the true Messiah: a messenger was necessary beforehand to "prepare his way." The tidings of God's Love, of His Fatherly Goodness, were not to be profaned by being poured upon the ears of those, who, sunk in sensuality or worldliness, were heedless of the messages which went to them daily from the author of their being, from the Lord of all things. Repentance was, therefore, first to be preached by John: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" "Repent"—change your mind, the whole attitude of your thoughts, towards the Living God, who speaks with you. Think of Him no longer as a mere national God, a Being whose capricious love for one chosen people will suffer all manner of evil to abound among them unchastised. Think of Him not as a hard and arbitrary sovereign, ruling by mere authority, and laying down for you a series of laws, of restraints and observances, which are only meant to damp and cheek the joy of your life, and form a heavy burden for you, too heavy to be borne. Think of Him still less as one who dwells on high, far removed from human beings, indifferent alike to their welfare and their woe. If such thoughts as these have hitherto possessed you, and serve in a measure to explain the proud and self-righteous, or the cold and unloving, or the wicked and disorderly, lives which you have led, let all this be put away. Think now of God as One who has called you out, as members of a chosen nation, to know more of His Love and Truth than others, that you might live yourselves, and be the ministers of Grace to *them*,—as One whose laws are the very laws for

which you were made, to which your Nature is conformed, in obedience to which you will find your truest good for body and soul,—as One who has formed you for Himself that you may “shew forth His Praise,” may “order your conversation right,” and so may “see the salvation of God.” Yes! when this call to repentance had been heard and obeyed, and the heart turned towards God, to be judged by His Law, by the Light shining from His Commandments,—turned towards Him with a longing desire for His Favour, with a dutiful dread of His displeasure,—then would the way be open for his teaching, who “took of the Father, and showed to his disciples,” who came to reveal the Father to us.

The teaching of the Baptist and that of the Christ did thus in fact harmonize and blend with each other. The vocation of the former, however, has now passed away. He seemed sent to Israel only,—

“to give knowledge of salvation unto God’s chosen people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of their God, whereby the dayspring from on high at length had visited them.”

He seemed to have been sent to speak words of comfort to them exclusively, such as those which the later Isaiah addressed to his countrymen, at the close of that long dreary night which they had passed, when their sun had gone down in thick gloom at the time of the Babylonish Captivity. And, perhaps, the views of John the Baptist, as well as his labours, were really confined to the realisation of that grand topic, which floated continually before the mind of each devout Jew, that the “day of the Lord” was at hand, when “the kingdom should be restored to Israel.” He was thinking only, perhaps, of the light that should “lighten the darkness” of his own land and people, and guide their feet into the way of peace.

But in the teaching of Jesus a light has shone, for all the nations of the earth,—“a light to lighten the Gentiles,” as well as “to be the glory of God’s people, Israel.” The issues of his doctrine were to be the abolition of all outward distinctions between the worshippers of the One Father. The catholic, the spiritual, nature of the religion of Christ, however much it may have been from time to time overshadowed and overgrown by traditions, dogmas, church systems and regulations, through which the natural blindness and selfishness of men has been suffered to distort it, appro-

priating and limiting the sun and air of heaven to those who comply with this or that rite, who hold this or that confession of faith,—that catholick spiritual teaching has cleared itself again and again from human accretions. It appears again now more catholick, more spiritual, than ever, capable of harmonizing with the more extended views respecting God and Nature and Man, which are the inheritance of this age, and ready to embrace, with the most hearty and joyous recognition, whatever truths have been anywhere revealed, in any age or place, under any circumstances, to the Family of Man.

There is a sense, then, in which Revelation is *unprogressive*. That which truly quickens and enlivens the heart of any man, that which is truly the dayspring from on high for him, can never be disproved, can never become darkness. That which we have once felt as a living power within us, brought home to the soul as eternal truth, will never cease to be true. We need not fear that it should ever cease to be precious,—that our Divine Treasures should ever turn, like fairy gold, into leaves or ashes in our keeping. It is the apprehension of this, however, which makes so many averse to examine the grounds of their religious belief,—averse even to the entertainment of new knowledge, new discoveries, lest among them they should find something which may, perhaps, disprove what they hold already as sacred truth. No! the revelations of God to man cannot thus contradict each other. But much, which to our imperfect apprehension seemed part of those revelations, will prove to be but human additions,—not the real “dayspring,” not the light from on high, but the morning mists, the earthborn exhalations, through which the light shone. And yet these human additions, this mixture of error, have not been suffered by God’s good Providence to become at any time sufficient to neutralize the virtue of the heaven-sent truth, to turn the light into the opposite darkness. Whenever there has been danger of this, as in the days immediately before Luther, the light has broken forth again, and scattered the clouds; and even, though storms and convulsions have been present, they have but helped the holy work of bringing forth again the light out of the darkness.

And so it is now. Again the Light of God’s Love has been clouded, and the Face of our Father has been almost hidden from us, by the doctrines of the Calvinistic School

on the one hand, and of the Saeramental on the other. For, in different ways, both these systems of teaching emphatically obscure the Grace of God, and misrepresent His Glorious Character,—the one by exhibiting the Divine Being, the Faithful Creator, who is “loving unto every-man,” and whose “tender mercies are over all His works,” as partial and unjust, choosing some and rejecting others among the children of men,—the other by telling us that we may not approach Him directly as our Father and Friend,—that—

for true love to throw itself upon the bosom of the Father is to ignore the office of the Church as a Mediator.

And both these have now for a time united to quench, if possible, that other Divine light, the light of Science, which God has given us in our own times, to be the special glory of the age, to be the helper and enlightener of men in these very days in which we live. They try to turn, if possible, this light into darkness: they either deny, or at least ignore, its existence, and the existence of the facts revealed by it; or they even venture to connect the discoveries of Science with the spirit of evil.

True Christianity, the essential Religion which Jesus taught, will not do this. It fears not the light of Modern Science, or the researches of Modern Criticism: it gladly welcomes them as unfolding to us more and more of the wonderful works, of the glorious attributes, of God. The Light, which Jesus brought,—the knowledge of God’s Fatherly Love to man, of our brotherhood to one another as children of God, of God’s Will that we should be “perfect, as He is perfect,” as becomes the children of His Love,—this Light, once revealed, can never be quenched, these truths can never be disproved. All nature and all history, however little they may be able to teach us of these things, can never take them from us; it is these alone which enable us to explain the difficulties, to answer the enigmas, which they contain. As our knowledge of nature and our knowledge of history increases, we may hope to see more and more of our Father’s Name written upon His works and on His dealings with man.

“To guide our feet into the way of peace,” says the Evangelist. The light of the knowledge of God is given us in the Gospel, but not for contemplation, for speculation, merely,—though this is indeed an employment well worthy

of our powers, as immortal, spiritual, beings, beings that claim kindred with Eternity. It is the feeling of this, which has originated all the hosts of cherubim and seraphim, which people the heaven of the poets and of the old theologians. They saw how little the children of men gave of their thoughts to the contemplation of the Highest, how weak those thoughts were, how little able to wing their way to the lowest footstep of His Throne; and therefore they gave loose to their fancy, and painted the upper air all over with imaginary forms, clothed or unclothed, human or semihuman,—(as the hangings of the Tabernacle in the Pentateuch were worked over with Cherubim,)—supposed to belong to creatures superior to man, above his wants and passions, untouched by guilty stains like him, and occupied continually in that adoration, which he was so little able, so little willing, to render.

Such ideas seem to us like the fairy tales of our childhood; and it would be hardly worth alluding to them but to remind ourselves and others that angels, such as these, are no essential part of Christianity,—that theories, say rather, fancies, concerning them have not the same ground as our belief in Him whom all things serve, to whom the elements of nature are obedient,—

“wind and storm fulfilling His Word,”—“Who maketh the winds His angels, and His ministers the flaming fire,”—

while the seemingly unruly world of human passions works but His Will.

All things serve Him; while some amongst His children seem especially set apart by temperament and opportunity for the contemplation of Him, whom none with bodily eyes have seen or can see. But light, even light from the place of glory, is chiefly given to us mortals that we may walk by it, “to lead our feet into the way of peace.” We may, we must, look up to heaven from time to time, that we may see the brightness of our Father’s Face, and sun our poor shivering souls in the light of His glorious perfections,—His Truth, His Love, His Wisdom and Might. But we must look mainly to be “guided by His Eye,” in the path He has prepared for us to walk in, which will be to us “the way of peace.” Is God indeed the God of Love, and our Father and Friend? Then, since He desires, He wills, our perfection, let us “follow Him as dear children,” and—“put away all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

The consciousness that this is the desire of our souls and the guiding principle of our lives, will bring us that inward serenity, which an unquiet conscience knows nothing of. Is God the God of Love, and our Father and Friend? What, then, must be our course and the posture of our hearts towards others, His children also as truly as we are, dear to Him and therefore to us? Is there any weak one whom we should despise?—any sinner whom we should reject?—any outcast whom we should pass by on the other side, when we have the power and opportunity to help him? Are not all our powers of every kind given us by Him in trust for His Church, that is, for the great human family, of whom Jesus is indeed the Brother, but every meanest, lowest, member is a brother or a sister too?

This is, indeed, the “way of peace.” Nothing but this love to God and to Man so fills up the heart as to leave no room for the torments of unsatisfied, selfish desire,—that bottomless abyss in which so many are tormented even now, who are rich in this world, but not towards God. To “take up the cross” daily, in filial submission to the Divine Will, after the example of Jesus, is to find rest to the soul. To lay down our life for the brethren,—to spend and be spent for love’s sake,—is to find it unto life eternal. Yes! the only deliverance from selfish aims and ends is not an anxious care for that same self, an eager desire to save one’s own soul,—but rather, a divine enthusiasm kindled within the heart, a conversion of the whole being to God, beheld as the source of the fervent love, the boundless patience and tenderness, of Christ, and of all that has ever been good and noble, excellent and great, in man. What would the brightest part of human nature be to us, if we did not take it to our hearts, as we may, as we must, as simply the reflection of the Image of God? But when we understand that every gleam of love and truth in human acts and sympathies is but a ray from that Central Fire, the heart of each man surely must beam within him at the thought that he, too, is called to belong to that holy company,—the lovers of God, the friends, the brethren, of men,—instead of living each apart, for selfish work and selfish enjoyment, or even for the everlasting interest, as he may think, of that poor solitary unit—his own soul!

[No. 6.—Third Series.]

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Evening, June 17, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

1 SAMUEL iii.18.—*And he said, It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good.*

THIS, as you know, is recorded as the utterance of the aged High Priest Eli, when Samuel had told him the words of the Lord, which he had heard in a vision of the night, denouncing woe against himself and his house for the sins which had defiled it.

“ And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold! I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

We have had a portion of the story of Eli brought before us in the First Lesson of this Evening, and another portion in that of this Morning; so that our Church expressly commends the whole narrative to our closer consideration this day. And indeed there is a peculiar pleasure and profit at the present time in the study of these old histories. The time was—not very long ago—when it was painful to read them, or to hear them read,—at least, some of them,—much more to fix the attention upon them, to weigh soberly the statements made in them, the sentiments expressed, the acts and feelings ascribed to the Most High in them. It was painful to find occurrences described as matters of fact, which we knew to be contradicted by the plainest conclusions of Modern Science, such as are taught to children in

every well-ordered school in the present day. It was far more painful to meet with utterances from the mouths of devout persons,—like the blessing pronounced on Jael, which we considered last Sunday,—or even represented as proceeding from Jehovah Himself, which jarred with all our moral feelings, contradicted our sense of right and wrong, and threw our whole mind into confusion and perplexity, in our thoughts about the Divine Being.

Under the dreadful pressure of the traditional system, which required us to believe each line, word, letter of the Bible as infallibly and Divinely true, there are few, I am sure, even of the most orthodox, who would not confess, if they spoke the truth, that they have had many troubled moments from this cause. And, if they have succeeded in shaking off the weight of doubt which such passages had awakened in their minds, it was only by turning their thoughts away from such questions altogether, or by bowing their heads in abject submission to a principle of Divine Sovereignty, which was felt to be overthrowing the very basis of morality, even while it was recognised: it was only by refusing altogether to look into those questions of Modern Science and Criticism, which touch the veracity of Scripture statement, and, in respect of moral questions, silencing the honest doubts of their nature, that nature which God has given us to be the reflection of His own, or stifling its honest indignation, by saying in the language of Eli in the text, “It is the Lord! let Him do as seemeth Him good,”—and by asserting that whatever “seems good to God,” must be good, though it seem otherwise to us.

And this last statement indeed is true, most true; and it is the answer we may well make ourselves, when perplexed with many of the difficulties of life. But the fallacy, by which so many are taught to corrupt a principle of life into one of death,—into a demoralizing principle, dishonouring to God and hurtful to man,—is this, that they assume that the Lord *has done* what he *has been said*, or *has only seemed, to have done*. All that pious men of old have written,—men taught in the main, as we trust we are, by the Spirit of God, yet with no promise of being kept thereby from any possibility of error in what they wrote, any more than in all which they spoke or thought,—all that they may have written,—rather, all that has been preserved to us of their writings, in many cases made up more or less of extracts from older

writings by other men, which have altogether perished,—is supposed to be a perfectly true account of what took place in the earlier ages of the world ; and their rude conceptions of the Deity—of how he walked, and talked, and even ate, and acted, with men—are forced upon the belief of the present more enlightened age as accounts of real matters of fact, the rejection of any particle of which may endanger the loss of all peace and comfort in this life, and all hope for eternity.

But how different is the spirit in which we are now able to peruse—ay, and to study closely—these ancient narratives of the Old Testament,—looking at them as the writings of devout men, men like ourselves, gifted with reason, intellect, imagination, as we are, subject to the influences of their time, to its ignorance, prejudices, superstitions, just as we are,—and compassed also with their own infirmities, as we are,—yet writings which in the Providence of God have been preserved to us, and handed down for our instruction, hoary with the age of twenty or thirty centuries ! To note, that, amidst all their points of difference, arising from local circumstances, and the limited knowledge of the age in which they lived, the thoughts of good men and true on matters of religion and morality, their sense of right and wrong, were substantially the same, in those ancient days, as now, —to trace the teaching of the same Divine Instructor in their hearts, as in ours,—to find in their breathings of faith and hope and love, their utterances of prayer and praise, the most suitable expression of the movements of our own spiritual life,—all this is most strengthening and reassuring ; it enables us to realise the essential unity of the human race as the offspring of God ; it enables us to discern more clearly the features of the Divine character reflected in His child ; it enables us to feel that of a truth “ in Him we live and move and have our being,”—that “ God dwelleth in us and we in God.”

In this spirit, then, let us come to the consideration of the Old Testament story to which the text refers. We have now no fear of the consequences of examining it too closely. We do not dread lest perchance we should discover something, some critical or scientific discrepancy, some moral contradiction, in some part of the narrative, which may be a stumbling-block to us, and prevent our going cheerfully forward, with firm step and upright confidence, rejoicing in

the light and freedom of the Gospel of Christ. And, indeed, when we look attentively into this narrative, as we find it in the first three chapters of Sainuel, we shall perceive a number of points in which it is strangely at variance with the language of the Pentateuch, and with the usual traditional notions as to the state of things in Israel.

Look, for instance, at the account here given us of Samuel's birth. He is not a *Priest* by descent from Aaron; he is not even a *Levite*; but his father Elkanah is expressly described as "a certain man of mount Ephraim, an Ephraimit, or man of Ephraim," 1K.xi.26. And yet here is Samuel admitted to perform holy duties in the Tabernacle, and afterwards we find him, though a mere layman, it would seem, but in any case not a Priest—one who was no reckless, presumptuous intruder into Divine things, but of whom it is said—

"all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord,"—

discharging the sacred office of the priesthood in direct disregard of that solemn command of the Pentateuch—

"Thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office; and *the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.*" N.iii.10.

What again is the meaning of Samuel's being "lent unto the Lord" from his *early infancy*,—of his "ministering before the Lord, being a *child*, girded with a linen ephod," 1S.ii.18? Even if he had been a Levite, whose office it was "to do the work in the Tabernacle of the Congregation," N.iv.3, yet the Law, supposed to be Divine, had distinctly said—

"This is it that concerns the Levites; from *twenty-and five years old and upward* they shall go in to wait upon the service of the Tabernacle of the Congregation." N.viii.24.

But, further, what need was there of such a child being "lent unto the Lord," if the Levitical system, as laid down in the Pentateuch, existed at all in Israel in those days? We read of Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phineas, and of "the priest's servant," and of Samuel, as concerned in the work about the Sanctuary of Shiloh. But there is no sign of any other Priests or Levites being employed there,—much less is there any sign of the 3,700 Priests and 4,600 Levites, who came shortly after to "turn the kingdom of Saul" to David, as the Chronicler tells us, 1Ch.xii.26,27, or of the 38,000 Levites, numbered afterwards by David, according to the same authority, 1Ch.xxiii.3,

"from the age of *thirty years and upwards*," of whom 21,000 were appointed to "set forward the work of the House of the Lord," 6,000 to be "officers and judges," 4,000 to be doorkeepers, and 4,000 choristers? If only a few of the fathers or grandfathers of these had attended to their duties in Eli's time, what need would there have been for a little child like this to "minister unto the Lord before Eli," and to be to all appearance the only servant thus employed,—for it was he who "opened the doors" of the Tabernacle, 1S.iii.15?

But this fact also, that the Tabernacle had "doors," whereas that described in the Pentateuch had only *hangings* or *curtains*,—the fact, again, that it is quietly said, as if it was merely the usual occurrence, "ere the lamp of God went out in the Temple of the Lord, where the Ark of God was," whereas the command in the Pentateuch was that the lamp should *never* be suffered to go out, but should "burn continually," Lxxiv.1-4,—the circumstance that Samuel's devout parents came up only *once* a year to "offer the yearly sacrifice" at Shiloh, whereas the Law prescribed that *three* times in the year "all the males" should appear before the presence of their God, and "should not appear empty," that is, should each time bring a sacrifice to offer,—all these are indications that the state of things in the Tabernacle at Shiloh was very different from what must have been the case, if the facts of the Pentateuch had been real history, and its laws had been observed in Israel.

But here, again, are words spoken in Jehovah's Name to the aged Priest :—

"I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever. And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread."

But these descendants of Eli's house would be priests of the seed of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, and, according to the Law, would have every right to enjoy their share of the sacrifices :—

"The priests the Levites, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire and His inheritance." N.xviii.1.

What power, then, would any "faithful priest" have had to exclude his brethren from the service of the Sanctuary?

What need could by any possibility arise, under such a law as this, for “all that were left in Eli’s house” to come humbly “crouching” in this way to their dignified brother, seeking employment in some lower office by which they might eat a piece of bread?

The fact is, as the results of Modern Criticism show conclusively, that the laws and narratives of the Pentateuch—most of them, at all events, if not all of them, as I believe—are of far later date than the days of Moses, or even than the days of Eli. There was, no doubt, a notable Sanctuary at Shiloh in Eli’s time,—the chief sacred place for Israel in those days, though by no means the only one,—since Bethel, Gilgal, Gibeah, Gibeon, Nob, Mizpeh, Hebron, Beersheba, Dan, and other towns, were also places of sacrificial worship, to which probably the neighbouring residents resorted, as Elkanah did to Shiloh. Thus, for instance, we are told that Samuel offered sacrifices at *Mizpeh*, 1S.vii.9, and at *Gilgal*, 1S.xi.15; as also that—

“ he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places; and his return was to *Ramah*, for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an *altar* unto the Lord.”

Yet all this was in direct contradiction to the law of the Pentateuch, which says,—

“ Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt-offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation to offer it unto the Lord, even that man shall be cut off from among his people.” Lev.xvii.8,9.

At Shiloh, then, there was no doubt a Tabernacle,—very probably the very same ancient Tabernacle, which they had brought with them out of Egypt, had carried from place to place through the wilderness, and set up at last at Shiloh, when they had made good their footing in the land of Canaan. But it was not that gorgous Tabernacle, described in the Book of Exodus, with its splendid inner curtains of “fine linen and blue,” worked over with cherubims, its outer ones of “goats’ hair,” its double coverings of “rams’ skins,” its boards and bars overlaid with gold, with rings of gold and silver sockets, its vail of “blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen of cunning work,” worked over with cherubims, and hung upon four pillars of wood overlaid with gold, “their hooks of gold, the four sockets of silver.” All these descriptions speak to us of a later age, as the time of Solomon, when, perhaps, this account of the

Mosaic Tabernacle may have been written, modelled upon the actual Temple of Solomon, which stood there in all its first magnificence before the writer's eye, and gave him the exact proportions which he has used for the Tabernacle. For an eminent English architect has written upon this subject in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, as follows, III.p.1455 :—

On comparing the Temple, as described in Kings and Chronicles, and by Josephus, with the Tabernacle, as just explained, the first thing that strikes us is, that *all the arrangements were exactly identical*, and the dimensions of every part were exactly double those of the preceding structure.

This writer, then, supposes that “the Temple, as built by Solomon, was only an *enlarged* copy of the Tabernacle.” Rather, the account of the Tabernacle, as given in the Book of Exodus, is only a *diminished* copy of Solomon’s Temple,—written, perhaps, by one who lived in the age when that Temple was built, who may have been practically concerned in its construction, may have been, perhaps, consulted about it, as any prophet or chief priest of that day would have been, and so was able to describe in minute detail the different parts of the structure, as we find them laid down in Exodus, almost as accurately as in the working-drawings of an architect. There is no hint, in the Books of Kings or Chronicles, that the Temple was copied from the Tabernacle,—that, in designing the plan of the former, any reference whatever was made to the (supposed) Divine Model, which would have been furnished by the latter; and surely this would have been mentioned in one or both of these elaborate accounts of the erection of the Temple, if there had been any real foundation for stating that fact. In the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom, indeed, Solomon is introduced as saying—

“Thou hast commanded me to build a Temple in Thy Holy Mount, and an altar in the City wherein Thou dwellest, a resemblance of the Holy Tabernacle which Thou hast prepared from the beginning.”

But this Book was written in a very late age, about 100 b.c.; and even here the writer was probably referring only to the *general* resemblance between the two structures, which would be obvious at first sight, and was hardly aware of that perfect agreement, which is now found to exist between them, as the result of the most recent investigations. That one of the two designs, however, was actually copied from the other, may now be considered certain. Yet the writers in Kings and Chronicles, as I have said, with every reason for mentioning the fact, if they had been aware of it, have not

dropped the slightest hint to show that the Temple was imitated from the Tabernacle. Nor is there any sign of such wonderful architectural and mechanical skill, as, according to the story, was employed about the building of the Tabernacle, existing in Israel in the days of the Judges, or in the later days of Samuel and Saul. On the other hand, in David's time, there was skill enough in Israel, with the help of the Tyrian workmen, to design such a building even as the Temple: for in an early part of his reign—

" Hiram king of Tyre sent messenger to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons, and they built David an house," 2 S.v.11,—

" And the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now! I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth in curtains," 2 S.vii.2.

These very " curtains," also, within which the Ark of God was dwelling, were the curtains of a Tabernacle built by David himself, without any reference to the Mosaic Temple. Solomon, also, erected other famous structures, which are thus enumerated,—

a palace for himself, grander than that which Hiram had built for his father, another for Pharaoh's daughter, the house of the forest of Lebanon, in which he sat in his Court of Judgment, the pillars all of cedar, seated on a throne of ivory and gold, in which six lions on either side, the symbols of the tribe of Judah, appeared (as in the thrones of Assyria) standing on the steps and supporting the arms of the chair, ivory palaces and ivory towers, used apparently for the king's armoury, the ascent from his own palace to the house or palace of Jehovah, a summer palace in Lebanon, stately gardens in Ethan, parades like those of the Eastern kings, the foundation of something like a stately school or college, costly aqueducts bringing water . . . to supply the king's palace in Jerusalem, the fortifications of Jerusalem completed, those of other cities begun. *Dict. of the Bible*, iii.p.1349.

Some of these, no doubt, as the " ivory palaces" and " ivory towers," were not built till afterwards, when " the navy of Tharshish," that is, the fleet of merchantships, which Solomon had at sea with the navy of Hiram, " came once in three years bringing gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks." There was no ivory apparently used in the Tabernacle, and none in the Temple. But we observe that the building of the Temple, the House of the Lord, is put upon the very same footing as the building of " his own house" in various passages, 1 K.iii.1,ix.1,10,x.12; and this of itself is sufficient to show that he had no Divine model for the one more than for the other. Knowing, therefore, as we now do, by the researches of Modern Criticism, that very much at all events—if not, as I fully believe, all—of the Pentateuch is of later date than the time of Moses, there seems scarcely room to doubt that the designs given in it for the Tabernacle were

reduced from those which were actually used for the Temple of Solomon, very probably by a writer who lived in that age.

There are many other points of a similar character, which might be noticed in the narrative before us, did the time and place allow it. But I have said enough for my present purpose,—enough to show from what difficulties we are relieved, in the closer consideration of such a passage as this, by finding that it is no longer bound upon us, as a part of a true living faith, to believe that every statement in the Pentateuch is historically true. We must not judge the writers in such cases by the stricter rules which we should apply in our own time, and which are in a great measure the result of our seeing the characters of the Divine Law of Truth upon our hearts, in a brighter light than they did, in the light of Christian teaching. We know how good men at heart, even in these days, distort and misrepresent—we should almost say, falsify—the doings of their adversaries, and deceive themselves, while so doing, with the notion that the deed justifies the means,—that they have a commission from God to defend His Cause against the dire assaults of His enemies, and, like Jael, they may use foul means to attain their end, if fair ones fail them. We have heard how great men of old, such as Jerome and Augustine, believed that they were doing service to God and the Church, by writing and publishing a mass of monstrous fictions, as the account of St. Antony and other such narratives. We know how at an earlier time false Gospels, false Epistles, a letter from Christ himself, accounts of his Infancy and Childhood, abounded in the early Church, and were written, some of them, at least, apparently with a devout purpose, and ascribed frequently to the apostles themselves. We know that in the Old Testament history, especially in the Pentateuch, the signs of a later date are manifest,—that for instance the whole Book of Deuteronomy was composed by a prophet who lived about the time of Josiah, and, though the words of it are put into the mouth of Moses, they are expressly adapted to the events which had recently happened, in that much later age. And even in the case of Jeremiah himself we have an instance, in the end of the 38th chapter of his prophecies, where he consents at the request of the king Zedekiah to tell a falsehood, and does so.

Yes! these men of old, the Scripture writers, thank God! were our own fellowmen, of the same flesh and blood as

ours, with its glories and its weaknesses,—but without the fulness and brightness of our light. This is the very source of comfort and strength for us in reading their words. The Bible would not afford such natural daily bread for our souls,—it would not be so “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,”—if it were not the work of fallible men, like ourselves, writing amidst their own peculiar circumstances, but writing under such temptations, as in all ages are common to men,—and thank God! writing also, as we feel, under the teaching of the selfsame Spirit, who is even now bearing witness with our spirit that we are sons of God.

The words, therefore, of the text, which are put by our brother-man into the mouth of Eli, are full of meaning for us; and again and again have they been uttered as the true expression of Christian feeling under some heavy, overwhelming calamity:—

“It is the Lord! let Him do as seemeth Him good.”

We know that Eli’s sin was this, that “his sons had made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” Had he been older and more vigorous, had he been able to rectify the evils, to restrain the offenders, it would have been a poor paltry shirking of duty, to sit with folded hands and say, “Let judgment come!” But there is a time when power has gone to redeem the past; and then there is only left submission to the Judge, the Avenger,—submission to Him who is a Father still in His heaviest judgments. The influence of parents has been made so great, at first so absolute, by the Author of man and nature, that they are justly held responsible to a great extent, in the eye of God and of their fellowmen, for the future conduct of their children. They are bound to give them in early life, when they are young and tender, pliable and malleable, by their instruction, but above all by their example, that holy infection of truth and honour, that love of truth for the truth’s sake, that reverence for God and Man, which will help to keep them from those low vices that especially degrade and “war against the soul,” and help to fit them to do their own parts manfully and nobly in life. But for those unhappy parents, who are grieving now in vain over the evil courses of their grown-up children, there remains but this consolation. *You*, indeed, have not corrected them, or not in time, not wisely, or in vain. But there is One who will correct them with judg-

ment, in this world or in the next, — whose chastenings may be terrible, but who will assuredly not lose one of His children,—for He is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of His Hand.

But not in such cases only will the words of the text apply. There are other deep sorrows, other great trials, of life, with respect to which we must calmly and confidently say—

“ It is the Lord! let Him do what seemeth Him good.”

Our Father in heaven has known how to order His own Universe, so as best to promote the moral and spiritual perfection of His intelligent creatures. No one destiny has been forgotten or neglected in the great plan for the advancement of the whole,—however it may seem so to us. We charge God foolishly when we complain that He does not stop the wheels of nature, when the innocent heart, the cherished and beloved form, lies helpless in their way. He has foreseen it all, and ordered everything for the real good of the victims,—for each victim as well as for humanity. Poor troubled soul! wrestling as thou imaginest with God in prayer for some blessing,—rather, seeking vainly, perhaps, the way into His Presence,—to whom He seems absent,—to whom it appears that He comes not, though you invoke Him so earnestly,—not for an instant has He withdrawn His sustaining hand; you are but learning to lean more heavily upon the Arm Divine, and thus to know that it is indeed there!

Instead, then, of praying for the removal by Divine Power of this or of that cause of physical suffering, let us seek to have our hearts brought more truly into unison with our Father’s heart, our wills more attuned to His Will. Thus may we learn to say, in all our sorrows, whether we can trace them to our own faults and failings or not,—

“ It is the Lord! let Him do what seemeth Him good.”

Not a capricious Ruler, but Perfect Wisdom, Perfect Truth, Perfect Love, displayed in Perfect Order, unvarying Law, sits upon the Throne of the Universe. This should be a quieting thought, even in the midst of the greatest calamities. Not by outcries and tears can we alter what is determined concerning us. Yet it is a Father who determines it, and who gives spiritual strength and support to all who look to Him, while they bow to His decree.

But there are many in these days who are lamenting mournfully not over their own temporal lot, but over what seems to them the decay of faith in the world, or over what they regard as the inroads made by man's restless intellect upon the inheritance of belief which they received from their fathers. They are tempted to wish that men had not studied God's Works or His Word, as in this generation they have been led to do, that so they might have still remained in the ignorance they found so blissful. But surely this is ungrateful and rebellious. Can light come except from the Source of all light? Will He, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, leave earnest seekers after Truth, of whom in these days there are so many, to wander away into the abysses of atheism and despair? Does not He preside over the education of the race, over the course of human thought? Has He given men faculties, and cursed the use of them?

No! let us hold fast by that cardinal truth, that doctrine of doctrines, that "God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." *With Him*, with a firm trust in Him, a more real feeling of His Presence, we shall indeed be rich, whatever we may be called upon to surrender of notions we had been taught to hold most dear and sacred. At all events, it is His Will that we have been brought into the world in *this age*,—in this age of earnest enquiry, of diligent criticism, and not in any of those "ages (miscalled) of *faith*," rather, ages of credulous submission to dogmatic authority, which are gone by for us, never to return. It is His doing that they are gone,—that superstition and idolatry are waning throughout Christendom, are giving way to a rational, intelligent, faith in the Living God, as revealed to us by Jesus Christ. Let us say then with our hearts, not sadly and submissively, but thankfully and joyfully,—

"It is the Lord! let Him do what it seemeth Him good."

[No. 7.—Third Series.]

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Morning, June 24, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

MAL.iii.6.—*For I am the LORD: I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*

Last Sunday morning we were considering the coming and preaching of John the Baptist as the preparation for the coming of Christ. To-day the services of the Church direct us to the same subject,—the chapter, from which the text is taken, having been selected as one of the Lessons of the day, because of its first verse being applied in the New Testament to the history of the Baptist, in memory of whom this day is kept as a festival in our Church.

The Book of the prophet Malachi is placed in our Bibles at the end of all the prophecies of the Old Testament. And on this account he is usually supposed to have been the last of the prophets of the Jewish Dispensation, between whom and John the Baptist no message came to man direct from God,—no Divine Word, uttered by inspired lips, broke the silence of four centuries. Thus one has lately written, *Ecce Homo*, p.2 :—

It was the glory of John the Baptist to have successfully revived the function of the prophet. For several centuries the function had remained in abeyance. It had become a remote, though it was still a fondly-cherished, tradition, that there had been a time when the nation had received guidance from commissioned representatives of its invisible King. We possess still the utterances of many of these prophets; and, when we consider the age in which they were delivered, we can clearly perceive that no more precious treasure was ever bestowed upon a nation, than these oracles of God which were committed to the Jews. They unite, in what was then the most effective way, all that is highest in poetry, and most fundamental in political science, with what is most practical in philosophy and most inspiring in religion. But prophecy was one of those gifts, which, like poetry or high art, are particularly apt to die out under change of times. Several centuries had succeeded each other, which

were all alike incapable of producing it. When John the Baptist appeared, not the oldest man in Palestine could remember to have spoken even in his earliest childhood with any man who had seen a prophet. The ancient scrolls remained, as amongst ourselves those Gothic cathedrals remain, of which we may produce more or less faithful imitations, but to the number of which we shall never add another. In these circumstances, it was an occurrence of the first magnitude, more important far than war or revolution, when a new prophet actually appeared. John the Baptist despised all the opposition of those *scribes*, who, in the long silence of the prophetic inspiration, had become the teachers of the nation, and who resisted him with the conservatism of lawyers, united to the bigotry of priests.

It is probable, indeed, that Malachi is the last of the true prophets of the Old Testament, whose words have been preserved to us in the sacred records of the Jews. In the time of the Maccabees there are many complaints that there was no more a prophet in Israel, 1 M. iv. 46, ix. 27, xiv. 41,—that is, none who came forth boldly in God's Name to *speak* His Word to the people. In the same age, however, about the year 165 B.C., the Book of Daniel is believed to have been written in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes; and on this account, from its being of so late a date, it was not placed among the Prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures, as it is in the English Version, the collection of the Prophets having been closed two centuries and a half previously with the writing of Malachi, perhaps under the direction of Nehemiah his contemporary.

It is possible, then, that Malachi may have really been the last of those bold, outspoken, prophets of the Old Dispensation, who were recognised as such by the people of their time, were regarded as commissioned from God to speak to them. Yet to suppose that he was really the last, before the Baptist came, who was raised to minister the Living Word among them,—who was sent, as God's Messenger, to rouse the slumbering souls, to reprove the careless, to comfort and strengthen the faithful and true of heart,—would be to contradict the very language of the text, the very principle which it announces, as the ground of all the Divine dealings with the children of men:—

"I am the **LORD**,—Jehovah, the Living God,—I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

No! we may be sure, our God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,"—not a fickle and changeable Being, not one who condescended to commune with a few men of the Hebrew race in former days, during a certain thousand years of their history, but has ever since withdrawn Himself from any such intimacy with His children, has shut up for

all time to come His infallible Revelation of Himself in a few scanty, defective,—not unfrequently, most obscure and unintelligible,—writings of theirs,—within the covers of a Book, which few, very few, can read in the original tongue, which millions on millions of the human race, in the ages past, as well as in the present, have never had a chance of reading at all. We believe in Jehovah—the Living God—who “changeth not,” but in every place, in every age, is still, as He has ever been, revealing Himself to the hearts and to the intellects of men,—is still saying to His prophets, “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people!” and by the lips of His messengers speaking “peace! peace!” to the broken and contrite spirit,—but is still also pouring daily fresh light from above, renewing again, if need be, the brightness of His former revelations, when dimmed by the fogs of ignorance and superstition, by sweeping them away, and exhibiting to our adoring minds, more clearly and fully than of old, the wonders of His works, the Glory and Goodness of His character.

Between the age of Malachi and John there were, doubtless, many prophets of this kind raised up to quicken the spiritual life of their brethren, to “utter forth” the Word of God to men. Only their words, if they merely preached to their contemporaries, have not been recorded for our learning, or their writings, if they wrote also for posterity, have not come down to us, or are not by our Church deemed *canonical*, and therefore, as some would say, Divine and Infallible. Yet in the apocryphal books of the Old Testament there are passages worthy to be ranked with any which are called canonical, and in spiritual strength and fervour far surpassing some of them,—passages, which contain assuredly, even as our own Church Homilies allow, rich lessons of Eternal Truth, the Living Bread, the Word of God. Where, for instance, in the Book of Proverbs or the Book of Job,—where in that of Ecclesiastes or of Esther,—shall we find words more true and living, which have more the ring of real prophetic utterances, than these from the apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus?—

“Look at the generations of old and see! Did ever any trust in the Lord and was confounded? Or did any abide in His Fear, and was forsaken? Or whom did He ever despise, that called upon Him? . . . They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts and humble their souls in His Sight, saying, We will fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men; for, as His Majesty is, so is His Mercy.” ii.10-18.

Listen now to these words of the prophet Malachi, iii. 16—

“ Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another : and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name.”

What is there which is to draw the line of distinction so sharply between these two passages, that the one is to be considered a mere fallible utterance, which we may criticise as much as we please, whereas the other is Divinely Infallible, and in every line, and word, and letter, is absolutely “ faultless, unerring, perfect,” “ teaching pure and simple truth”? Is the mere accident of the Hebrew Canon having been closed at a particular epoch, or of the spiritual taste of certain unknown Hebrew Doctors of that age having selected one and rejected another of the books which had come into their hands, sufficient to determine that one shall be regarded for ever as the word of man, and the other as “ the Unerring Word of the Living God”? I need hardly remind you that by the Roman and Greek Churches—that is, in fact, by the greater part of Christendom—these apocrypha books are regarded as canonical ; and the Council of Trent pronounced the enlarged Canon, including the apocryphal books, to be deserving in all its parts of “ equal veneration,” and issued a solemn anathema against all who should “ not receive the entire books as sacred and canonical.”

At the time when the prophet Malachi wrote, the Jews had returned some years from the Captivity, and were settled again in their own land. The Temple had been rebuilt : the sacrificial system was in full operation, as it had been restored by the zealous exertions of Ezra and Nehemiah. And yet the prophet finds much to condemn in the proceedings of the people. It is true, they no longer practised the open idolatries, the impure rites and human sacrifices, which were so common in Judah before the exile, and had called forth the severest reprobation from Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The former of these exclaims, vii. 30, 31—

“ The children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord : they have set their abominations in the House which is called by My Name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire.”

And so the latter testifies, v. 11—

“ As I live, saith the Lord God, surely, because thou hast defiled my Sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee, neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.”

We do not find that after the return from Babylon they ever fell again into these licentious and horrible practices. It is true Malachi himself says in one place, ii.11,12—

“ Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which He loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob.”

But this is the only reference which he makes to the Jews of his time being connected in any way with the practice of idolatry; and here, it is plain, he has in view, not the open worship of false gods, but the danger of such apostacy to be apprehended from the marriages, which many of the returned Jews had contracted with the “ daughters of a strange god,”—that is, with heathen women of the tribes around them, who were still practising their old idolatries, and would be likely to draw their husbands very soon into the same habits. Thus Ezra writes, ix.1,2 :—

“ Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, even the Priests and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the land according to their abominations,—the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons; so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of these lands; yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.”

And Ezra set himself very zealously to correct this evil, and gives the names of more than a hundred, including twenty-seven of the Priests and Levites, who agreed to put away their heathen wives. Yet twenty years afterwards Nehemiah writes, xiii.23-25 :—

“ In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons or for yourselves.”

There is good reason to suppose that, about this very time, just before this interference of Nehemiah, the words of the prophet Malachi were written, referring evidently to the same offence, which seems to have been effectually repressed, at least among the great body of the people, by the active measures of Ezra and Nehemiah. After this time, no doubt, individual Jews fell away into idolatry, more especially under the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes,—that black demon of their later history,—when “ many of the Israelites,” we

are told, either seduced by the influence or coerced by the severity of that king,—

“ consented to his religion and sacrificed unto idols.” 1 Macc.i.43.

But there was never again any general national apostasy from the worship of Jehovah. Whatever else they did, they clung at least to the outward show of a purer and more spiritual religion : they no longer set up their “ detestable things” in the temple, or “ burnt their sons and daughters with fire” under the very walls of Jerusalem.

It has been usual to regard this phenomenon as the effect of the severe chastisement, with which the Jews had been visited for their idolatries and other wickedness, in the great catastrophe of the Babylonish Captivity. It is assumed that by that terrible stroke they were at last thoroughly humbled, and brought down into the dust of self-reproach and self-abasement, and that thus, broken-hearted and penitent, the great body of the Jewish people returned to their native land, with their hearts steadfastly set against idolatry, resolved no more to provoke the Divine Wrath by falling back again to those sins,—

“ like the dog to his vomit, or the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

And, doubtless, there were some among them who were thus affected. There were prophets, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel,—princes and rulers, like Ezra and Nehemiah,—who humbled themselves in mournful confession of the sins of others, not their own ; and there were probably other true penitents, who were stricken through with shame and contrition, at the recollection of the gross abominations, which had demoralized the land. But this was very far from being the case with all, or even with the great body, of the Jewish exiles. Notwithstanding the hearty encouragement which Cyrus gave to all who desired to go up to Jerusalem, and rebuild the temple, when he restored to them the sacred vessels and proclaimed—

“ Who is there among you of all his people ? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the House of Jehovah, the God of Israel—He is the God—which is in Jerusalem,” Ezr.i.3—yet, as Thomas Scott says in his *Commentary*—

It is evident that a great majority chose to continue in the settlements which they had there gained [in the lands of the heathen] ; some of them afterwards returned, but very many never did ; and immense numbers of Jews were from that time dispersed, in every city and country, over all that part of the world : so that the new settlement, in Judaea and at Jerusalem, formed but a small part of that people, as they continued to be distinguished from other nations.

And of this "small part," as we have seen, there were not a few, even among the Priests and Levites, who in the midst of all the affecting circumstances of the times, aroused the disgust and indignation of their leaders, by intermarrying with the heathen round them, in direct defiance of the laws of the Pentateuch, which in that age were put forth with great emphasis, and, no doubt, were reverenced by most pious minds in Israel as Mosaic and Divine. It is plain also that many of these returning exiles would be earnest and devout men, whose patriotic and religious zeal welcomed joyfully the proclamation of Cyrus,—who were glad to "come out" from the abominations of the heathen, among whom they had been mingled in Egypt and Babylon, and sincerely desired to shake off all idolatrous practices, and hereafter to serve the God of Israel alone.

This accounts for the fact that, after the return from exile, the people no longer practised idolatry. They had been winnowed, as it were, of those, who were either altogether indifferent to the worship of Jehovah, as patriots or religionists, or were strongly devoted to idolatrous practices. And thus it became possible to maintain uninterruptedly the worship of Jehovah in its purer form, as far as outward rites were concerned, in accordance with the rules of the Mosaic Law, which were now very strenuously enforced, perhaps for the first time in the history of Israel. Yet still this was but a "small remnant," as the prophets called it, a "chosen seed," which accepted the offered grace of Cyrus, and returned from their exile to Jerusalem. The great body of the Jewish people were content to abandon their land, their holy city, and their religion, and to settle comfortably down under the rule of foreign masters, more especially since the Persian religion, now established in Babylon, was itself a pure Monotheism, more pure, indeed, than that hitherto held by the great majority of the Jews themselves.

In Malachi's time, then, the people of Judaea and Jerusalem were worshippers of Jehovah alone; to Him alone they brought their sacrifices; by His Name alone they swore. Yet the prophet rebukes them severely for their profaneness and irreligion. He says that the priests "despised the name of the Lord,"—that they offered "polluted bread" upon His Altar,—that they brought for sacrifice "the blind, the lame, and the sick," such as they would not have

dared to offer to their governor,—that they would do nothing except for pay :—

“ Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought ? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine Altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.” i.10.

“ The priest’s lips,” he says—

“ should keep knowledge, and they should seek the Lord at his mouth ; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. But ye are departed out of the way ; ye have caused many to stumble at the Law ; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts.” ii.7,8.

And, as for the people, they too were rebellious :—

“ Even from the days of your fathers, ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them.” iii.7.

They had “ robbed God ” in not bringing “ tithes and offerings ”; they had said—

“ It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts ? ” iii.14.

In one word, it is plain that the religion of Israel was full at this time of formality and hypocrisy. There were some, no doubt, among them, who, as he says, “ feared the Lord, and spake often one to another,” and who should be remembered in that day, when the Lord would “ make up His jewels.” But the religion of the people generally was only superficial : their heart was unsound. Their worship, in fact, was paid to Jehovah, as to a powerful Being, who had a special and partial affection for the “ sons of Jacob.” They thought that this special and partial affection must have some ground in themselves,—that either they or their fathers were more worthy of the Divine Favour than other men, and they expected to receive plain outward signs of that Favour. They did not feel that indeed they had the surest proof of God’s Love, in His having raised up in different ages all along so many great prophets to speak His Word among them,—in His having given them a clearer knowledge of His Will, that they might minister out of their fulness to others. They looked for earthly blessings, worldly glory, supremacy among the nations, headship over the whole human race, as the crown of their deserts, as the reward of their allegiance. And, when disappointed of this hope, they murmured against their Divine King, and served Him with a heartless irreverence :—

“ I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us ? ” i.2.

In short, while they professed to trust in God, to glorify the name of Jehovah, their trust was too often a confidence

in themselves,—was mixed, at least, with a vain-glorious, proud, exclusiveness. With the Pharisees of a later day they said, “Stand by, for we are holier than thou!” “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we!” The prophets from time to time rebuked them for it. Yet the strong national enthusiasm of the prophets themselves tended also very often to foment it. “God would not *forsake* his people,”—this was the continual burden of their songs,—as if God’s work could not go on in this world without *their* existence as a people, without *their* agency. And, though they recognised His chastening Hand, they thought they had no ground to fear that extremity of His Anger, which might fall on transgressors of another race.

But the prophet in the text warns them in the name of the God of Israel,—“I am Jehovah—I change not.” They had to do with Him of whom it is written,—

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God,”—
of whom also it is written, in words of Eternal Truth,
though they come out of the Apocrypha,—

“We will fall into the hands of the Lord and not into the hands of men; for as His Majesty is, so is His Mercy.”

On the one hand, the Living God is a “Devouring Fire,” for all which is evil in His Universe, for all that tends to destroy the best happiness and vitiate the perfection of His creatures. He is eternally and unchangeably righteous: He will not overlook the sins of His people. He will not suffer evil in them, because they are His people, favoured beyond others with the revelations of His Love; they are only so blessed that they may live more faithfully, and be the ministers of His Grace to others. He will surely “visit their transgressions with the rod and their sin with scourges.” And so Malachi says in His Name, in the words before the text, iii.5:—

“I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

And he adds, iv.1—

“For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

This was the expectation which the prophet cherished, referring to the coming of that Great Day, the day of the Lord, when the Messiah should at last appear, the glorious Prince of the seed of David, whom older prophets had announced, and whom all devout Jews expected eagerly from age to age, as "the Lord,"—that is to say, the chief, the king,—who should restore the kingdom and the glory to Israel.

"But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth?"

Again, the prophet's words give the answer for all true hearts; "I am Jehovah—I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." He is eternally and unchangeably good and gracious, as well as righteous,—the Living God,—the source of all light and life to His creatures.

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; because His compassions fail not."

"Gracious and righteous is the Lord: therefore will He teach sinners in the way."

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

"He is faithful, that has promised."

He, therefore, that has begun to deal graciously with them, as members of the great human family,—that has dealt mercifully with them all along, as a Father with his wayward children, correcting, reproofing, exhorting, comforting,—will not suddenly change His course towards them, will not fail in his faithfulness and tender consideration for them. And, therefore, before that day shall come, "He will send," the prophet says, "His Messenger to prepare the way before Him";—

"And the Lord,—the chief, the king—whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple [or to his place], even the angel of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of Hosts." iii.1.

He will send "Elijah the prophet," he says, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord":—

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." iv.5,6.

It may be that the prophet here refers to some tradition of the Jews, which represented Elijah, about whom some wonderful legends are told in the book of Kings, as about to come again as the precursor of the Messiah's reign. In the *Dict. of the Bible*, i.p.531, we read as follows:—

How deep was the impression which he made on the mind of the nation, may be judged of from the fixed belief which many centuries afterwards prevailed, that Elijah would again appear for the relief and restoration of his

country. The prophecy of Malachi was possibly at once a cause and an illustration of the strength of this belief. What it had grown to at the time of our Lord's birth, and how continually the great Prophet was present to the expectations of the people, we do not need the evidence of the Talmud to assure us; it is patent on every page of the Gospels. Each remarkable person, as he arrives on the scene, be his habits and characteristics what they may,—the stern John equally with his gentle Successor,—is proclaimed to be Elijah. His appearance in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration does not seem to have startled the disciples. They were "sore afraid," but not apparently surprised. On the contrary, St. Peter immediately purposes to erect a tent for the Prophet, whose arrival they had been so long expecting. Even the cry of our Lord from the Cross, containing, as it did, but a slight resemblance to the name of Elijah, immediately suggested him to the bystanders. "He calleth for Elijah." "Let be, let us see if Elijah will come to save him."

The "evidence of the Talmud" on this point is to this effect, *Ib* :—

He is recorded as having often appeared to the wise and good Rabbis,—at prayer in the wilderness or on their journeys,—generally in the form of an Arabian merchant. At the circumcision of a child, a seat was always placed for him, that, as the zealous champion and messenger of the covenant of circumcision, he might watch over the due performance of the rite. During certain prayers the door of the house was set open, that Elijah might enter and announce the Messiah. His coming will be three days before that of the Messiah, and on each of the three he will proclaim, in a voice which shall be heard all over the earth, peace, happiness, salvation, respectively. So firm was the conviction of his speedy arrival, that when goods were found, and no owner appeared to claim them, the common saying was, "Put them by till Elijah comes."

It is not improbable, therefore, that the prophet, in the ease before us, did expect with his fellowcountrymen the actual reappearance of Elijah, as the herald of the Messiah's coming. Or it may be that he has used here the name Elijah, as significant of one who should come in the spirit of Elijah,—who should do once more the work which Elijah is recorded to have done of old, by reviving the belief among the people of the presence of the Living God in Israel. "Jehovah, He is the God! Jehovah, He is the God!"—this is given as the cry which burst from the lips of the assembled multitude in Elijah's presence, when they realised for a moment the fact, that their God was the Living God, the God of their fathers, the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel," and not, like the Tyrian Baal, a god but of yesterday, who was "talking," perhaps, or "pursuing," or "journeying," or "sleeping," and must needs be awaked, before He could hear the cry of his worshippers. Such a messenger as this would Jehovah send before the face of His anointed, to prepare the way for his appearing,—as Elijah says, to "turn their hearts back again," or, as Malachi says, to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the

hearts of the children to their fathers,"—in other words, to unite one and all, both old and young, in devout expectation of the coming of their King and in diligent preparation for it.

This prophecy, we know, is applied expressly in the New Testament to John the Baptist as the precursor of Christ, and was so applied by our Lord himself, M.xi.14,xvii.11,12, Mk. ix.13; and in the first chapter of St. Luke, which we were considering last Sunday, these words, even before the birth of John the Baptist, are put into the mouth of the angel Gabriel. This last passage, indeed, is part of the mythical history of the Nativity, and for the reasons, which I stated last Sunday, cannot be regarded as historical fact. But in the other places, where Jesus himself says of John—

" If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come,"—

" Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatever they listed,"—

we have plain proof that our Lord himself understood the words of Malachi as referring to one who should come in the spirit of Elijah, rather than to Elijah himself, reappearing in the latter days. And John came indeed in that spirit, bringing home to the people the idea of the actual presence of the Living God, as a Lawgiver and Judge, among them. In those days also they had lulled themselves to sleep with the notion, " We have Abraham to our father." But John called them a " blood of vipers"; he bade them " bring forth fruits meet for repentance"; he told them that—

" the axe was now laid to the root of the trees, and every tree, which brought not forth good fruit, should be hewn down and cast into the fire."

He charged them to be kind to one another, to be merciful and charitable, to be upright and honest, to be gentle and forbearing, to speak the truth, to be contented. In such a posture they might expect with hope the coming of him, who should " baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Such appears to be the meaning of the text before us, and of the whole prophecy to which it belongs, in relation first to the Jews of Malachi's time, and secondly to John the Baptist, in express reference to whom the chapter has been read in the Church to-day. Briefly now, in conclusion, let us consider its more direct practical bearing upon ourselves.

And, first, it is a great thing to have this truth graven indelibly upon our minds that our God is " Jehovah," the Living God, " who changeth not, who cannot change,"

because he is perfectly wise and good,—that He, who rules by orderly unchangeable laws in the Natural World, is the same who rules in the Moral and Spiritual world, by fixed laws, unchangeable laws, which cannot be set aside for anything better, laws which, as one has said—

attach to every wrong and error a measured, inevitable penalty, to every rightness and prudence an assured reward,—penalty, of which the remittance cannot be purchased, and reward of which the promise cannot be broken.

By these eternal, unchanging laws,—as sure as that which makes the stone fall to the ground by its own weight,—each act of wilful, unconscious, sin will certainly, inevitably, be followed by its judgment. It is a breach of the laws of our spiritual being, and, as such, it must have its evil consequences of some kind or other; just as certainly as any breach of the laws of our bodily system will leave its injurious effects behind, and, if repeated, may be the cause of permanent disease, of pain and misery, even of death.

But this conviction, that every law of our nature, whether physical or intellectual, moral or spiritual, will inevitably take its course,—that no prayers nor entreaties of all the human race, upon their knees in sackcloth and in ashes, will avail to alter the state of the earth or the atmosphere, to quiet the raging of the elements, or to move them from their state of seeming repose, or to break asunder the adamantine band which couples wilful sin with woe,—this conviction is not antagonistic to the Christian idea of prayer; it only sweeps away the superstitions which have crept around it, which attained such giant height in the ages (mis-called) of faith, the ages of miracles, that, according to the notions then current, earth was not solid, nor water fluid, gravitation was suspended, fire had no power to burn, when the saints willed it otherwise.

Let us be thankful that we do not live in such a world as they imagined, where all would be capricious, uncertain, changeable,—where the blessed order, which now reigns in each domain of this mighty Universe, and with reference to which we know our steps must be guided, would be exchanged for doubt and uncertainty, confusion and chaos. Let us study thankfully our Father's laws in nature, with a view to shape our course accordingly, while yet we dwell in this His world. Let us take submissively the just consequences of our sins,—the “inevitable penalty” of all our “wrongdoing and error,”—which the Eternal Laws of the

Moral and Spiritual World may inflict upon us. Yet still there will remain for us a sphere, in which we live, not by bread, but by His Word,—in which we may seek and find Him, if we seek Him with all our heart,—in which our prayers, our sad confessions, our earnest desires, will, according to the laws of the spiritual world, assuredly be heard and answered with blessing, with fresh supplies of that life and strength, by which we may do God's Will more faithfully, of that heart-joy, in the midst of all our chastenings, “with whieh a stranger doth not intermedale,” of that peace which “passes all understanding.”

(ii) But we observe again that there is still a tendency to fall back in another form upon the very watchword of the Jews of old. We are “sons of Jacob,” “children of Abraham,” “the temple of the Lord,” they said. And there are those now, it must be feared, who say, “We are Christians, members of the true Church; we hold the orthodox faith; we are duly baptized, we have duly communicated; and therefore we are safe and sheltered from wrath in God's Ark”;—when yet the spirit of Christ does not abide in them, whose fruit is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”—the true tempers of a child of God. Yet unless that spirit be theirs,—the spirit of true holiness, which seeks to glorify God with every part of our being, with body, soul, and spirit, which are God's,—the spirit of true charity, which flows out unweariedly towards friend and foe, towards man everywhere, under all circumstances, as the child of God,—which “rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth,” which “bears, believes, hopes, endures, all things,” —it is in vain that men bear the name of Christians or Churchmen, that they boast of the soundness of their creed, and keep themselves aloof from the publican and sinner, the Samaritan and the heretic. Against such as these, in fact, the words of John the Baptist were especially directed,—“O brood of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Nay, against these the stern reproof of Jesus himself was uttered again and again,—

“Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Ye serpents! ye brood of vipers! how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?”

(iii) Lastly, there is a danger, too, to be dreaded on the other side, lest the brighter light which we now enjoy, the deliverance from the bondage of the letter, from the thraldom

of old ignorance and superstition,—the clearer recognition of God's Fatherly Love towards us and to all mankind, and of our brotherly relation to each other, as children of God,—lest this Gospel of Grace, which we have received by the ministry of Jesus Christ, should be suffered to become to us an occasion of falling, lest we should give way to the temptation to sin the more freely, because we know the Love of God abounds.

No! our God is "Jehovah"! "He changeth not! Therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed." Therefore His Infinite Patience bears with us,—not because He is indifferent to evil, to that evil which is corrupting, wasting, destroying us,—but because He is the same Unchangeable God, our Faithful Creator, whose "gifts and calling" are "without repentance," are never recalled, though they may be abused and neglected,—because He has made us in His Image, after His Likeness. And each single spark of spiritual life, which His own Spirit has kindled within us,—so long as it is not wholly extinguished by our own persistent continuance in known habits of sin,—so long as there is one small remnant of right feeling still left within us, one single thought or desire of the heart, which has not bowed the knee to Baal,—is a sign that God still loves us, loves us as children, and will correct and chasten us as children. "For what son is he, whom the Father chasteneth not?"

MORNING HYMN,

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, BY THOS. ARNOLD, D.D., LATE HEAD
MASTER OF RUGBY SCHOOL.

Come, my soul, thou must be waking;
Now is breaking
O'er the earth another day;
Come, to Him who made this splendour
See thou render
All thy feeble powers can pay.

Lo! how all of breath partaking,
Gladly waking,
Hail the sun's enliv'ning light!
Plants, whose life mere sap doth nourish,
Rise and flourish,
When he breaks the shades of night.

Thou too hail the light returning;
Ready burning
Be the incense of thy powers:
For the night is safely ended;
God hath tended
With His care thy helpless hours.

Pray that He may prosper ever
Each endeavour,
When thine aim is good and true;
But that He may ever thwart thee,
And convert thee,
When thou evil wouldest pursue.

Think that He thy ways beholdeth :
He unfoldeth
Every fault that lurks within,—
Every stain of shame gloss'd over
Can discover,
And discern each deed of sin.

See that thou His gifts abuse not;
O refuse not
His Good Spirit's voice to hear:
Then His angels to defend thee
Shall attend thee,
Hosts whom Satan's self shall fear.

So shalt thou on life's last morrow,
Free from sorrow,
Pass away in slumber sweet;
And releas'd from death's dark sadness,
Rise in gladness,
That far brighter Sun to greet.

